

Message Text

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ACTION VO-03

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1440

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 6799

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CIVS, PFOR, LE

SUBJECT: VISA APPLICATIONS BY REPRESENTATIVES OF LEBANESE
COMBATANT ORGANIZATIONS

REF: STATE 179976

1. WE NOTE DEPARTMENT'S DETERMINATION THAT
REPRESENTATIVES OF "COMBATANT ORGANIZATIONS" IN LEBANON
ARE INELIGIBLE FOR VISAS TO VISIT U.S. IF FOR PURPOSE OF
"SOLICITING SUPPORT OR ACQUIRING EQUIPMENT."

2. WE SEE SOME POTENTIAL PROBLEMS OF PROCEDURE
IN IMPLEMENTING THIS DECISION. FIRST, SINCE
BEIRUT VISA SECTION IS CLOSED, LEBANESE
APPLICANTS WILL BE APPLYING FOR VISAS IN THIRD
COUNTRIES. DELAY CAUSED BY SEVERAL WEEKS' LONG SECURITY
ADVISORY OPINION REQUIREMENT COULD BE SOURCE OF GREAT
PERSONAL INCONVENIENCE AND POLITICAL EMBARRASSMENT
TO USG.

3. ANOTHER POTENTIAL PROBLEM IS CASE WHERE
APPLICANT MAY BE BOTH REPRESENTATIVE OF COMBATANT
ORGANIZATION AND RECOGNIZED GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL AT
SAME TIME. THIS APPLIES PARTICULARLY TO LEADING
MEMBERS OF MARONITE "FOUR FRONT" AND THEIR
FAMILIES AND CLOSE COLLABORATORS--THE FRANGIES,
CHAMOUNS AND GEMAYELS, ETC. SUCH PERSONS MIGHT
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CLAIM PURPOSE OF VISIT IS GOVERNMENTAL BUSINESS.

4. FURTHERMORE, THERE IS POSSIBILITY OF ADVERSE PUBLIC REACTION IN US AS WELL AS LEBANON FROM MEMBERS OR PARTISANS OF ORGANIZATIONS WHICH UP TO PRESENT HAVE SENT REPRESENTATIVES TO US TO SOLICIT SUPPORT BUT WILL HENCEFORTH FIND SUCH VISIT RESTRICTED BY DEPT'S DECISION OUTLINED REFTEL. THIS IS PARTICULARLY TRUE IN CASE OF CHRISTIANS, SINCE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF LEBANESE EMIGRANTS ARE CHRISTIAN.

5. IN RESPONSE THESE POINTS, WE RECOMMEND DEPT CONSIDER FOLLOWING:

A. REMIND CONSULAR OFFICERS AT ALL POSTS CAREFULLY DETERMINE EXACT PURPOSE OF TRAVEL AND POLITICAL AND/OR COMBATANT GROUP AFFILIATION OF LEBANESE APPLICANTS AND POSSIBLE IMPACT OF REFTEL ON VISA ELIGIBILITY.

B. REDUCE TO FEW DAYS PROCESSING PERIOD FOR SECURITY ADVISORY OPINION REQUESTS SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE REFTEL FOR APPLICANTS CLAIMING LEBANESE GOVERNMENT STATUS TO MINIMIZE PERSONAL HARDSHIP AND ADVERSE REACTION. SINCE VISA FILES HAVE BEEN TRANSFERRED, AMEMBASSY BEIRUT NEED NOT BE QUERIED IN SUCH CASES UNLESS NEA/ARN DEEMS IT NECESSARY.

C. DEPT DISSEMINATE TO ALL CONSULAR OFFICES LIST OF COMBATANT ORGANIZATIONS AND KNOWN REPRESENTATIVES THEREOF TO FACILITATE DETERMINATION VISA ELEGIBILITY.
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